



LITTLE PITCHER STORIES.

BERTIE'S TELEGRAPH.

BY

Constance L.

MRS. MAY.

BOSTON:

WILLIAM H. HILL, JR., & CO.

1868.

~~KC18070~~

KC18575



33*24

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

The New Cottage,	7
----------------------------	---

CHAPTER II.

Bertie's Telegraph,	16
-------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

Something about Uncle Barney,	26
-----------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

Charley ties a Square Knot,	35
---------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

Flora's Message,	44
----------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

Grandma's Chest of Drawers,	53
---------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

Charley takes his Bearings,	63
---------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Charley strikes a Bargain,	73
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IX.

A Pleasant Recollection,	86
------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER X.

Amy's Improvement,	96
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER XI.

The Storm that stopped the Telegraph,	106
-----------------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

The Black Pullet breaks up,	115
---------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

Charley's Orphan Asylum,	125
------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

The Heavy Message,	133
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XV.

Bertie's-Loss and Gain,	143
-----------------------------------	-----

BERTIE'S TELEGRAPH.



CHAPTER I.

THE NEW COTTAGE.

CHARLEY WATERS and his brother Bertie live in a new house. Their home took fire one cold night, and when the fire went out there was nothing but a heap of blackened cinders where home had been. But their papa covered the ugly spot with a pretty cottage, and now you cannot see it. Charley and Bertie have no sisters, and their cousins, Amy and Flora Lee, who live in a white cottage across the way, have no brothers; so the four children

seem very near to each other. If they were truly brothers and sisters they could not love one another more.

Their homes are on opposite corners of a beautiful street, and the old house was the mate to the white cottage. I call it the old house to distinguish it from the new ; it was not really old. It had green blinds, and a tiny porch instead of a broad piazza, and there were no glass doors. The new house is painted brown. It has large rooms with inside shutters, glass doors opening everywhere, and all the modern inconveniencies, as Grandma Lee says. Charley and Bertie have a pleasant bed-room, with rosy paper on the walls, and a rosy carpet on the floor. One plate glass window opens toward the home of Flora and Amy, and the other keeps guard over the homestead where Grandma Lee lives.

There is an old house for you ! built be-

fore any of you can remember. It has moss on the sloping roof, and as many panes in one small window as there are in half the big windows of the brown cottage. It has tall cherry trees in the front yard, and they are now white with blossoms. Robin red breast is so happy about it, that he sings all day long. He has taken up his abode in the choicest tree, and means to be on hand, I can tell you, when cherries are ripe. When that day comes, he will have to share with his friends, the boys and girls, — unwillingly, I fear, for he is a greedy little bird; but the children have sharp eyes, and will know when to claim their rights. I do not remember when the homestead was built, neither does Grandma Lee. It was old when she was a young lady. It is the mother of the white and brown cottages across the way, as grandma is mother to the master of the one, and the mistress of the other; for Mr. John

Lee and Mrs. Mary Waters are brother and sister, and when they were children the old house was their home. It was the refuge, too, of Charley and Bertie when the fire turned them out of doors.

When Mr. John Lee and Mrs. Mary Waters were children, the corner lots opposite were simply green fields; and then they used to run and play in the long grass; making curls and chains of stout dandelion stems, blowing the downy seeds from the ripened blossoms to see if mother wanted them, with a sober faith in the result; holding the golden buttercup under the chin, that they might tell by the brightness of color reflected who loved butter best. And when haying-time came, how they sported and gambolled! And now they are grown-up people, sedate and dignified.

Charley and Bertie are so delighted with their pretty home they cannot express their joy. They think moving very nice sport, and

so it is when one has nothing to do but enjoy the changes it brings. And moving brought to them a day of new things, for the fire made a clean sweep. Even the chicken house was not spared, and the foolish hens not understanding the right use of their legs, wandered into the flames and were roasted in full feather.

Of all the improvements, the chicken house promised Charley the most pleasure; and when it was finished, and the family, consisting of a great many lady hens and only one gentleman, had moved in, he surveyed the scene with quiet satisfaction. His brother looked on with less interest, because his little mind was occupied by an important scheme he had not made known to Charley. Grandma Lee had promised to buy all the poultry the boys could raise, and Charley was calculating how much Fourth of July money his sales would bring him. He was literally

counting his chickens before they were hatched.

"I say," said Bertie, "which hen are you going to set?"

"How can I tell?" replied Charley. "It depends upon which one wants to set."

"Does it? I should not ask, I should pick out that white one with yellow feet, and shut her up in a barrel with a lot of eggs. Then, in a week or two I should take off the cover and expect her to walk out with a nice brood of chickens."

"That is because you are a goose," said Charley, bluntly.

"Am I? Then you're another," was the cool retort. "If I am a goose, you are a bigger one and an older one, too."

This answer amused Charley. He put his arm across Bertie's shoulder, and said, "Well done, Bubby; that was a bright idea for a six year old."

Bertie shook off the arm, impatiently. "I will not be called Bubby," he said; "and I am not a six year old."

"Beg pardon. You may call me an eight year old, I shall not object."

"I guess you wont. When you are eight I shall be almost seven."

"Only half a year to wait, Bertie. How many chickens are you going to raise?"

"I don't know. How many are you?"

"As many as my eggs will hatch."

"How many have you got?"

"Twenty fresh ones."

"Where did you get twenty eggs? I haven't the first one."

"Oh, I have been saving them up all winter, two at a time."

"Perhaps some of them are rotten."

"No, *sir*. They are fresh, every one. Grandma said so when she gave them to me. If a hen wants to set, I shall let her;

and in three weeks you may look out for peepers."

"Three weeks!"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I shall give it up."

"Not going to back down?"

"It is too long to wait; besides, I want to do something else."

"What?"

"Amy and I know."

"Wont you tell me?"

"Yes, if you will help."

"I am your man. What is it?"

"You know that ball of twine?"

"Yes."

"And the two big spools grandma gave Amy?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am going to make a telegraph out of them."

"You can't."

“ Yes, I can.”

“ How ? ”

“ Why, you see, our bedroom window is opposite Amy’s, and we can talk across, just as easy.”

“ Yes,” said Charley.

“ And I thought a telegraph would be so handy ; we could send messages and things to each other, and it would be jolly.”

“ So it would,” said Charley. “ How are you to get it up there ? ”

“ Amy knows. The twine goes round the spools ; I don’t know exactly how, but Amy does. Let’s ask her.”

“ Well,” said Charley.

CHAPTER II.

BERTIE'S TELEGRAPH.

THEY went in pursuit of Amy. She was in the garden running and playing with her little sister Flora.

"How are you, telegraph?" was Charley's salutation.

"Oh, you know about it, do you?" she answered, coming towards them. "How do you like our plan?"

"First-rate, as far as I can see into it."

"How far is that?"

"Not more than a mile. Bertie didn't make it very clear."

"Come into the house and I will explain it," said Amy.

They went in and up to Amy's room. Flora following with Bertie, whom she was coaxing to promise that he would send the very first "messenger" to her.

"I will," said Bertie, "and it shall be something good." So Flora felt a lively interest in the telegraph.

There seemed to be preparations on foot in Amy's chamber, for the big spools were on the window seat, and there was a ball of cord upon the floor. Amy picked up the ball and told Charley to take one of the spools.

"Now," she said, going to the window-seat, "that is your house at that corner, and this is mine."

"Yes," said Charley.

"Put your spool down on one end, so."

"So it is," said Charley.

"You can hold it now, but when we carry the line across the street we must make it fast with a big nail, — drive it clear through, you

know, so that the spools can turn round on it."

"I see," said Charley.

"Now, Bertie, come and hold my spool."

Bertie took Amy's place, and she began to wind off the cord. She carried it round the spools, and joined the ends.

"That makes two lines you see. We can tie our message to one, and when the spools are fastened down we can turn them so, and that will carry the message over."

"That's it, Charley," exclaimed Bertie. "I could have shown you how it was, if I had only had the things. My twine is a great deal stronger than that, and will work better."

"Who is to operate?" queried Charley.

"Oh, it takes two. Amy will be stationed at this end, and I at the other."

"And if the thing fails to come to time, you can give directions by word of mouth."

"What?" demanded Bertie, vacantly.

"Why, if the telegraph doesn't work, or gets out of order, you can talk to each other and give directions, without leaving your post."

"Oh, yes; and that will be a saving of time."

"Our telegraph will have an advantage over the real one," said Amy.

"It is a real one," answered Bertie, quickly.

"Yes, Bertie; but it is not exactly like the one out in the street with tall posts and wires."

"Not exactly, Amy; but then it will be just as good."

"Better," asserted Amy. "You can't send anything but messages by that one, and you can by this."

"I am going to have a messenger," said Flora.

"Yes, dear. We can send anything we please by this."

"If the string don't break," suggested Charley.

"Oh, the string wont break, will it, Amy?"

"No, Bertie; it is as strong as a rope."

"Ropes have a weak place in them, sometimes."

"I don't think there will be any weak place in Bertie's telegraph. It is his, you know."

"Why is it?"

"It was Bertie's own idea; but he could not make it work without help, so he came to me."

"What put it into your head, Bert?"

"Nothing. I guess it grew there," said Bertie, modestly.

"I think he is very smart for a little one; don't you, Amy?"

Bertie's head went up at the beginning of Charley's sentence, but drooped, like a lily on its stem, at the close.

"That is just like you!" exclaimed Amy. "You are always teasing him about being little, and he is not so much smaller than other folks."

"I know what you mean by that," retorted Charley; "you think he is as big as I am."

"So I do, and so does everybody. What is it people say when you are walking to church hand in hand?"

"Pshaw!" uttered Charley, impatiently.

"What is it, Bertie?"

"'Little boys, are you twins?'" repeated Bertie, mockingly. "And then Charley gets mad; doesn't he? You ought to see him swell up! His face gets red, and he answers, 'No, madam; he is a year younger than I am,' and that makes folks laugh."

"It doesn't either," said Charley.

"I have seen them laugh," Amy asserted, by way of confirming Bertie's words; "and

now if we have made fuss enough about nothing, we will go back to the telegraph."

"You have not given me any part in it," grumbled Charley.

"But we will. We cannot do much without Charley's help."

Charley, somewhat mollified, turned his attention to Amy's rude model of Bertie's idea.

"Are you going to nail the spools inside or out?"

"Outside," said Amy. "We couldn't shut the window over the lines, and it wouldn't do to drive a nail inside."

"So it wouldn't," said Charley.

"When shall you put it up?"

"We might begin now, if we had the nails."

"Nailing the spools down is the easiest part of it; getting the twine up here, is the puzzler."

"Bring it up," advised Bertie.

"How will you carry it across the street?"

"Throw it across."

"Pooh!" said Charley.

"No, Bertie, we cannot do it so; that is the puzzler, as Charley says."

"If we had two balls of twine we might manage it," said Charley, after a little reflection.

"How?" inquired Amy, earnestly.

"You could throw one out of your window, and we could throw the other out of ours, and tie them together in the street; then we could pull in."

"That is the way," declared Amy clapping her hands, "we never should have got it up without Charley."

"Where will you get your two balls?" queried Bertie.

"We can make two out of yours. If we had it here we could be winding it off."

"Let Flora run over after it. She wants to help make the telegraph."

"I can," chirped Flora.

But she was in such haste she rolled half way down the stairs, and before she got across the street she left the imprint of her little figure in the dust. She came back holding up the twine in triumph; and after Amy had washed her face and hands, and shaken out her dress, she looked not much the worse for her fall.

Bertie made two balls of the twine, and then they prepared to reduce theory to practice. In other words, they were ready to put up the telegraph.

"That looks like Uncle Barney out by our wood-pile," said Bertie, casually.

Charley's head and Amy's met at the window, and their united voices exclaimed, —

“It is Uncle Barney!”

In a twinkling the room was vacant, and the four, under full sail, were making for Uncle Barney.

CHAPTER III.

SOMETHING ABOUT UNCLE BARNEY.

UNCLE BARNEY was sawing wood. He had just lifted a heavy log to its place on the saw-horse, and was wiping the dust and moisture from his forehead with a red cotton handkerchief; so he did not take off his hat to the children, as was his custom.

It was already in his hand; but he gave it a flourish before putting it on again.

“Good-morning, young masters and misses. Your bright faces and the tulips yonder, are akin.”

“Thank you, Uncle Barney,” Amy replied, pleasantly. “I hope you are very well, this warm day.”

“Ay, ay. The warmish weather is good for poor folks and the garden. It is time for the crops to be budding up a bit ; they need the heat. A fine house your father has been raising, Mr. Charley, in place of the old one. But it is none too good for him, none too good. The editor of the bank should have the best.”

“Editor of the bank !” exclaimed Charley, “papa is not that.”

“Isn’t he, now ?”

“He is the cashier,” prompted Bertie.

“Well, well. He is the captain of the moneys, and a rich man. That is what I mind.”

“I don’t believe papa is rich, do you, Charley ?”

“No, Bertie ; we should have heard about it before.”

“He keeps all the moneys, and if the king of the bank is not rich, who is ?” demanded Uncle Barney.

"We don't know much about such things," said Amy, "but we have come to borrow some of your money, if you can spare it."

Uncle Barney chuckled to himself as he slapped his pocket, which sent out a merry jingle.

"Getting ready for my new station, you see," he explained. "It would be a sudden thing to some poor men, but not to me, not to me. I have been on the lookout for many a year."

"For the fortune, Uncle Barney?"

"Yes, miss, it is sure to be coming."

"Who do you think will bring it?"

"Which?"

"Who do you think will bring it? Where is it coming from? Have you any rich relations, — uncles, cousins, or friends?"

"No, miss. I have nobody. Brother Tim died, and he is gone; and Benny, he just went away, which is the same thing. No, miss, I am alone in the world."

"Where do you suppose your fortune is now?" inquired Charley.

Uncle Barney laughed. "If I knew, my boy, do you think I would stop here sawing wood? I would go and put my hand on it just. But it is somewhere," he added quickly, as he noted Charley's look of doubt.

"I hope it is," said Amy, "and much good may it do you. Can you spare us some change now?"

Uncle Barney put his hand into his pocket, and drew forth a handful of nails of various ages and sizes. Some of them new and straight, others rusty and crooked.

"Loose change enough," he muttered. "Not of the right sort, but it has the ring, it has the ring," and covering the nails with his other hand, he shook them childishly.

"Do you hear it?" he asked, gleefully. "It has the right chink. I shut my eyes, and then it is the real stuff itself, and I am Barney

the rich ; not Uncle Barney, working for a living, and my saw-horse is a horse no longer, but —”

“What ?” chorussed the children.

Uncle Barney shut his mouth closely. Another word would have betrayed his secret, but he was too cautious to speak it.

“What ?” the children repeated.

He took no notice of the query, but went on. “With this in my pocket, I am as good as a rich man, when I don’t see it, and I mostly keeps it out of sight. What size will do you, miss ?”

Amy selected two that she thought would do.

“Can you give us these two long, bright ones ?” she asked.

He picked them out, and handed them to her. She thanked him, smilingly.

“Any more ?”

“No, thank you ; these will do.”

He restored the nails to his pocket with an air of satisfaction.

"I passes them round," he said, "and play they was pennies. That gets my hand in. When the pennies come, I shall be ready. Much obliged to you for asking."

"I should not ask if they were truly pennies," said Amy; "but I am sure you would give them just as willingly."

"That is true, miss."

"And I shall not forget your generosity. Good-morning."

"Good-morning to you."

They went back to their work, and Uncle Barney began to saw the big log.

A long time ago, when he was a young man, he had a fever. When the fever left him, it took with it more than it brought, and more than belonged to it. It carried away a portion of Uncle Barney's wits.

That was too bad; for Uncle Barney was a

young man of moderate abilities, and had no wits to spare. He needed all the faculties nature had given him. So, when the fever carried away his wits, it did him an injury that never could be repaired in this world.

But it left something to take the place of the lost sense. It left a flattering hope, that was a comfort to Uncle Barney, because it promised surely. He was certain that some day a fortune would come to him. He was happy in the hope, because he never doubted its truth. And he had made up his mind what to do with the fortune; at least, with a portion of it. But that was a secret. Many times he had been on the point of disclosing it, but only on the point.

What great good the fortune was to bring him he had never whispered to a soul; but he thought about it, dreamed of it, and chuckled over it; and the boys and girls wondered what it could be, and wished that Uncle Bar-

ney would speak ; for they were sure the fortune would never come, and if they had to wait for that, they should never know.

Uncle Barney had a good job at the brown cottage. All next winter's wood was to be sawed, split, and piled, and the garden was to be under his charge ; so his summer's work was before him. But he could not undertake so long a job without stating the case clearly to his employer ; and Mr. Waters understood that if Uncle Barney's fortune should arrive before the work was finished, he would be obliged to leave him at short notice. He was perfectly willing to employ him on his own terms, and the old man was easy in his mind.

Uncle Barney was happy. He labored steadily and faithfully, but with the feeling that grew stronger day by day, that the fortune was drawing nearer. How it was coming, he could not tell, nor did he question the hope that flattered him, but he went to work every

morning, almost sure that he would be a rich man before night; and to bed every night, strong in the faith that a fortune would be on his pillow when he should wake. And the fortune had form and substance in Uncle Barney's mind's eye. It was a big net full of shining gold, which glittered between the meshes, and jingled musically at the slightest touch. It was real gold, but it existed only in Uncle Barney's imagination.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLEY TIES A SQUARE KNOT.

CHARLEY went into the wood-shed for a hammer, and then they returned to Amy's room ; but when they got there dinner was ready, and after dinner it was time to go to school ; and when school was done, Grandma Lee wanted somebody to read to her ; so the work of putting up the telegraph was postponed until the next day, which was Saturday, and a holiday. Bright and early in the morning, Charley and Bertie made their appearance.

“Now,” said Amy, “we have the whole day before us. We can get it in working order before night.”

"That's so," answered Charley, cheerily. "Everything is ready for a start. Bring the hammer, Bertie."

They went up stairs, and Charley nailed one of the spools to the window-sill in Amy's chamber. Then he glanced over the way, with an air of disgust.

"What is the matter?" Bertie asked.

"What a goney I am!"

"A what?"

"A goney."

"What's a goney?"

"I don't know, and don't want to. But it is something very stupid, and that is what I am. I ought to have taken our spool home last night, then I could have saved time by nailing it on before breakfast."

"We cannot expect to save much time before we get the telegraph up," said Amy.

"We will make that pay for all our steps."

Charley took the hammer and the spool, and went off whistling. Amy and Bertie watched him until he went into the house; and as he appeared at the pleasant bed-room window, and commenced operations at the other end of the line, they gave him three cheers. He took off his hat and swung it in return. After the spool was made fast, he shouted,—

“Done!”

“Hurrah!” was wafted from the other side.

“Now for the twine,” said Charley.

“What?”

“The twine. Where did you put it?”

“Here,” said Bertie.

“Where?”

“Hold it up,” suggested Amy.

“Show it to him.”

Bertie held it up, and Charley sung out,
“All right. Bring it along.”

"He wants it over there," said Amy. So Bertie ran over with the balls of twine.

"I didn't want but one," said Charley; "carry the other back."

"Why couldn't you say so in the first place," demanded Bertie, who was quite out of breath.

"I did."

"No, you did not."

"Well, I meant to. Now run back, like a good boy, wont you, Bertie, with this one, and tell Amy to tie it round the spool, and throw it out of the window."

"Why, you just nailed it down."

"What?"

"The spool."

"Throw the twine out of the window. I will do the same, and you can go down and tie the ends together."

Bertie did as he was bid, and then stood in the street below, waiting for the balls to drop.

Charley looking out, saw a team coming, and shouted to Bertie to keep his eyes about him, and not get run over. Then his ball of twine went tumbling and bouncing down, and Amy dropped hers at the same instant. Bertie picked them up, and brought the two together, but how to join them he did not know. Charley and Amy saw their mistake and called out,

“Hold on! you can’t do it. We have begun wrong.”

“We ought to have paid out,” screamed Charley. “Wind her up, Bertie, and wait for me to come down.”

He loosened the end that had been made fast to the spool, and went down.

“We ought to have held on to the balls,” he said, taking one and beginning to wind up.

“Let her drop, Amy.”

Amy obeyed.

“Now, we will try it again.”

This time they dropped the ends of the

twine, and Bertie succeeded in tying them together.

“Pull her in,” shouted Charley.

“And be quick about it,” added Bertie ;
“there’s a wagon coming.”

Charley popped his head out to see how far off the wagon was, and lost time by so doing ; for, although Amy pulled diligently at her end of the line, it was only a few feet from the ground when the horse wanted to cross.

The driver did not see the obstruction, but the horse did, and began to prick up his ears.

“Git up,” bawled the man. But there was Bertie standing in the road, making signs for him to stop.

“If you will please to wait a minute, sir, the horse can go under it,” he said. “It is our telegraph.”

The man was a father, and he had not forgotten that he was once a little boy ; besides,

he was not in a hurry, so he nodded pleasantly, and waited for Charley and Amy to draw up the line.

The horse wanted to pass under when it was high enough to clear his head ; but his master said " Whoa." He wanted to see how they were going to manage it. It pleased Charley to know the man was looking on, so he made quite a parade of pulling in, and giving orders to Amy. He was showing off. But when the twine began to tighten, the knot would not bear it ; snap it went, and the two strings fell to the ground. Charley would not have cared, if he had not had a spectator ; but the man laughed, and he was deeply mortified.

" Never mind," said the man, touching up his horse, " try again. I will report in the next town that the wires are down."

I am sorry to say, after he had passed by, Charley began to scold. He was quite crest-

fallen, and very much out of sorts, and he vented his ill-nature upon Bertie.

"Didn't you know any better than to tie a slip-knot?" he demanded angrily.

"I tied the best knot I could," said Bertie. "How could I tell it was goin' to slip?"

"If that was your best, you had better let it alone," growled Charley. "I might have tied it myself."

"Well, tie it yourself."

And that is what Charley should have done in the first place, for he had learned how to make a square knot, and Bertie had not. Charley gave a sharp answer to Bertie's retort, and Amy laying down her ball of twine, went away from the window.

"What are you doing?" inquired Charley.

"Nothing," said Amy.

"Don't you want to play?"

"Not if you are going to quarrel."

"Who is quarrelling? I am not."

"No more am I," said Bertie. "Wont you try once more?"

"Yes, do," urged Charley, "the third time never fails."

So Amy came back to the window, and Charley and Bertie changed places.

Charley tied a square knot that would not slip, and the twine was raised, passed round the spools, and dropped again, and he tied another knot.

"Now it is a mile too loose," cried Bertie.

"I will fix that," said Charley.

He went up and tightened the twine, until it stretched in two lines across the street, from one house to the other. Then little Flora, who had been in mamma's room looking on, came out and clapped her hands; and Bertie sung out, "Three cheers for the telegraph!"

And Amy called for three cheers for Bertie. Then Flora asked for her "messenger" and Amy told her to be patient until Bertie could get it ready to send across the wires.

CHAPTER V.

FLORA'S MESSAGE.

IT was well that Flora was warned by Amy to be patient, for many were the difficulties to be overcome, before her precious "messenger" could be put into her two little hands that would not keep still, so eager were they to grasp it. Her bright cheeks were a deeper red, and her black eyes snapped out and twinkled with expectation and excitement.

"Be quick, Bertie," she urged, but the wind took her baby voice and carried it away. It did not go over to Bertie, as she willed it; it went with the wind.

Bertie worked as fast as his nimble fingers

could fly. He was very eager to send a message by the new telegraph. Flora laughed merrily when she saw him attach a small roll to one of the lines. It fluttered in the air like a white bird.

"That is mine!" she cried. "Do you see it, sister? It is my messenger flying over to me."

Amy was all ready for the signal, and when Bertie shouted, "Now!" she began to turn the spool. But the message did not move.

"Turn!" said Bertie.

"Why don't you turn!" screamed Charley, at the top of his voice.

"I am turning," said Amy.

"Which way?"

She made motions to show that she was turning the right way.

"Why don't it move, then?" cried Bertie, in a despairing tone.

"The line moves," Amy answered.

"So it does here," said Charley.

"But the message don't," said Bertie, impatiently.

"If the line moves, why doesn't it carry the message with it?" demanded Amy.

"I don't know," said Bertie.

"Perhaps I can tell."

She went over and looked into the matter. •

"Of course it cannot move," she said. "It is just hung on with a double string, and the line slips right through it."

"Is that all?"

"That is all, Bertie."

"Oh, yes," said Charley. "It ought to be tied tight to the line."

"Certainly," returned Amy.

"Your telegraph will work now, Bertie. Don't be discouraged."

She went back to her station; and now the message moved with the line, but so slowly, they could have run back and forth with it a

dozen times before it reached Flora's impatient fingers. The spools did not revolve easily, and the operators were in a hurry. A number of messages were waiting, that ought to be sent through without delay.

The little white roll came to shore at last. It was directed to Miss Flora Lee, and it contained such a pretty picture! A little girl in a white dress and red shoes, leading a white lamb over a yellow bridge, to drink at the blue brook beyond. Flora was delighted.

"Bertie promised me something good," she said, "but this is gooder!"

It was a message she could understand and appreciate.

"Now you must send one to Bertie in return," said her sister.

Flora's eyes filled with tears.

"But, Amy, I couldnt," she declared, "I couldnt spare it."

"Not this one, darling; I did not mean for

you to part with this. But something to say, 'Thank you, Bertie, for being so kind.' "

"Goody!" exclaimed Flora. "You say it for me, on a piece of paper."

"Well, dear."

Amy wrote out the message and tied it to the telegraph, and then she added one she had prepared for Charley, and another for Bertie.

"Hold on!" cried Bertie, "what are you up to? We were just going to send one."

"Send it along," said Amy; "put yours on the other line."

Bertie fastened his message to the other line, and then there were four on the way at the same time.

"I tell you what. Our line is a rusher!" boasted Charley. "Four messages at once. Whew!"

"I wish it was a rusher," said Amy, working away at her spool which seemed to turn harder and harder. And the messages moved

as if they had not quite decided to go over. They took a good step forward, and stopped to consider before venturing farther. When they were half way across, Bertie's spool came to a stand.

"Look here, Amy," he called, "something needs greasing. What is it?"

"Our wits, I imagine," she answered, laughing pleasantly. "Let's rest a minute and think."

So the two operators sat down to rest from their labors, and to sharpen their wits; and the messages, suspended in the air, waited for the result.

"I am afraid we shall have to give up the spools," said Bertie, after a little reflection.

"Yes," said Amy, who had arrived at the same conclusion. "I think if we had more twine, we could manage a basket better."

"A basket?"

Amy nodded.

“How?”

Talking across, with the wind blowing her words away, was not easy; so she beckoned Charley and Bertie over. They left their office to take care of itself while they visited the operator at the other station.

“Did you say a basket?”

“Yes, boys, to put the messages in. We should need another ball of twine though, to tie it to. The string must be long enough to reach across twice. We must tie the basket as near the middle of the string as we can, and pull it over.”

“How could we get it back again?” asked Bertie.

“Why,” said Charley, “you don’t both pull at once.”

“No,” said Amy, “one pulls, and the other pays out. If you send a message to me, you put it in the basket, and I draw it over with my string while you let yours out.”

“And if you send to me I pull in and you pay out.”

“That’s it, Bertie. The basket will be an improvement on the spools.”

“Must we take this line down?”

“Oh, no, Bertie; we will want it to steady the other. We can attach the basket to it by a loop, and it will run right along on it.”

“I see it running now,” said Charley.

“You will see it if you wait awhile,” Amy retorted. “And now, Bertie, go back to your spool and turn.”

“Like a turner,” said Charley.

“Yes, Bertie, turn like a turner, for we wont patronize this line much longer.”

The messages hitched along in the same undecided manner; putting a foot forward and pausing to reflect; taking a bold step, and hanging back as if ashamed of the movement. They were almost across. A few more turns of the spool, and a few more

hitches and pauses, were all that was required, when Charley broke into a merry laugh, and pointed to the old homestead. The sitting-room window was up and Grandma Lee, wonder-struck, was gazing at Bertie's telegraph. She had pushed up her glasses to get a better view, her chin had dropped, and her open mouth seemed to be taking in the strange affair. Bertie waved his hand, and proposed they should go in and explain it to her. The proposition was gladly accepted.

The fact is they were a little tired. The operators left their posts, the messages remained suspended in the air, and Flora rolling up her precious picture, scampered off with the rest.

CHAPTER VI.

GRANDMA'S CHEST OF DRAWERS.

GRANDMA LEE went to the door to receive them.

"What on earth is the sense of a clothes line up in the clouds?" she asked. "Things wont dry any better for being so high up."

"It is not a clothes line, grandma," said Charley, "it is a telegraph."

"A what?"

"A telegraph. We have been all day putting it up."

Grandma's face softened into a smile.

"The dear things," she said. "Why don't you take off those white rags that are hanging to it?"

"Why, grandma, what a funny woman you are! Those are not rags, they are messages."

"Oh!" said grandma.

"Yes," continued Bertie, "they are messages on the way; they have not got there yet."

"My eyesight is rather poor, and I called them rags. Where are they going, dear?"

"That big one is going to Amy, the others to Charley and me."

"And mine has come," said Flora, producing her picture.

"La! Is that it? I went to the window to call Charley, when something flashed across my specks, and made me dizzy. I took them off and wiped them, but it didn't make any difference. Then says I to myself, 'Them dear children have been up to something,' but I could not make out clearly what. So it is a telegraph."

"Yes, grandma; but we have not got it right yet. We want some more twine."

"And a basket," added Amy.

"Yes, grandma, more twine and a basket."

"There used to be a ball of twine in that chest of drawers," said grandma. "Maybe it is there now."

"May I look?"

"Yes, Bertie."

"And I?" said Charley.

"Yes, my dear; you may rummage as much as you please."

"What sort of a basket do you want, dear,—one with a bail to it, or not?"

"Something with a handle to it," said Amy. "We want to hang it on the line to put the messages in."

Grandma went into the store-room, and brought out half a dozen baskets with handles to them.

"There, take your pick," she said, heartily.

Amy selected one that she thought would do, and put it aside to carry home with her. Then, unable to resist the attraction of the chest of drawers, she joined the boys and Flora in their busy search.

There was nothing in grandma's house that afforded the children more enjoyment than this same chest of drawers, with its clear face of shining oak and its rows of burnished brass rings.

They had access to but one drawer, however, — the upper one. What the others contained, they never knew, and never thought of asking; but their childish fancies filled them with wonders too rich and rare for the eyes of common mortals. They were always locked; and they really contained piles of homespun linen, the work of Grandma Lee's girlhood, and sacred relics of her early married life. The one drawer that was open to

them was a mine of never-failing treasure. Something new was unearthed at every visit. Odds and ends here congregated.

There was a dilapidated Punch and Judy that had seen better days; for it once figured as a weather-vane on the big barn; but the stout arm of Judy was broken, and the head-gear of Punch laid low. There were scraps of colored leather, and bits of iron and lead; buttons by the gross, coils of wire, brass-headed nails, and lumps of chalk, buckles and old medals, tarnished gold cord, and purses suffering from a goneness sad to witness.

“Oh, what have I found?” exclaimed Bertie, tugging away at a red silk string that seemed to have no end.

“What is it?” queried Flora, trying to help him.

“That,” said grandma, looking up, “was your grandfather’s sash.”

"I thought he was a gempleman," said Flora.

"And so he was, my pet. A truer gentleman never lived."

"They don't wear sashes," Flora muttered, shaking her curls doubtfully, "nor boys don't, — only girls like me and Amy."

"He only wore it with his uniform," said grandma, mildly.

"Why, was he a soldier?"

"Yes, Charley, he was a captain."

"Anything like these soldiers round here?"

"Well, no, dear; he was what is called a fair-weather soldier."

"Was he afraid to go out when it rained?" asked Bertie.

"Not exactly," said grandma, laughing. "A fair-weather soldier puts on a gay uniform and marches about the streets on training days. He does not go to war."

"Don't go to war!"

"No, dear."

"Pooh! I wouldn't be that kind of a soldier."

"Nor I either," said Charley.

"If he was a captain, I suppose he wore a sword," said Amy.

"Did he?" demanded Charley, eagerly.

"Yes, dear. And he was the straightest, trimmest officer you ever saw, if he was a fair-weather soldier." Grandma's bent figure straightened, and her eye kindled. "I was proud of him when I saw his white plume nodding, and heard him give his orders; and well I might be. There was not a man among them all that was his equal, to my way of thinking." And a faint flush rose to grandma's faded cheeks.

"I wish I had that sword this minute," said Charley, marching around the room,

and keeping step to an imaginary drum and fife.

"Do look at him!" exclaimed Amy, laughing. "He struts and sticks up his head like a young rooster."

"Yes," said Bertie, "he thinks he is captain of a whole regiment."

"Company, you mean, Bertie."

"No, I don't. He feels too big for any company. How are you, captain?"

Charley, not heeding their comments, hung around grandma's chair.

"Say," he asked, coaxingly, "haven't you got the sword now? I *do* wish I had it."

"It may be in the garret," she answered, somewhat reluctantly, "but it is not a suitable plaything for little boys. It is not quite safe."

"Little boys!" he repeated, contemptuously. "Please, grandma, I will be *so* careful."

Grandma could not resist his pleading, and she reflected that the sword must be rusty, and past its prime ; so she told Charley he might look in the chest that stood in the north-east corner. The children clapped their hands, and the treasure-drawer was in a moment deserted.

“ And, Amy — ”

“ Yes, grandma.”

“ Bring down that bandbox that sets on the black trunk.”

“ Which corner ? ” said Charley.

“ You cannot fail to see it ; it stands right alongside the big chest. Flora dear, you had better stay here.”

“ I couldnt, grandma,” she answered, gravely, — “ I couldnt. Amy wants me to help her bring the bandbox down.”

“ Oh,” said grandma.

“ Yes ; and I couldnt if I stayed here,” she asserted, hurrying on. “ Wait for me, sister.”

Amy gave Flora a helping hand, and they mounted to the garret. The trap-door was open. Amy assisted Flora to mount the ladder, and closed the heavy door.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARLEY TAKES HIS BEARINGS.

CHARLEY and Bertie were there before them. Charley stood in the centre of the room, with outstretched arms, steadily facing some object. Amy thought he was getting ready to make a speech. Suddenly he exclaimed, "I have it," and darted towards the corner to which his right hand pointed.

"What is the matter?" asked Bertie.
"Are you crazy?"

"Crazy? no. I was taking my bearings," said Charley.

"What is that?"

"You never studied geography," he retorted, loftily.

"No," said Bertie; "but Amy has. What's bearings, Amy?"

"Bearings? I don't know, Bertie; I never studied that. Charley will have to explain."

"That," said Charley, touching a horseshoe that hung on the wall, "is north."

"Is it?" inquired Bertie. "I thought it was a horseshoe."

"That," pursued Charley, disdaining to notice the interruption, "is a horseshoe."

"So I call it," said Bertie.

"I mean," correcting himself, "it is north. Well, I take my bearings from that. When you stand with your face towards the north, south will be behind you; your right hand points to the east, and your left hand to the west."

"Just so," said Bertie.

"I hung this horseshoe up here to take my bearings from; so I always know which way

to go. That is the north-east corner, and there is the big chest."

"Can't you tell the north side of the house without a horseshoe to reckon from?" said Amy. "And of course that is the east. Doesn't the sun always shine in there the very first thing?"

"When it doesn't rain," suggested Bertie.

"I don't care," said Charley. "My way is the right way; and I cannot look at that horseshoe without saying to myself, 'You are facing the north.' And then I have my bearings."

The sword was in the big chest, and the bandbox in its place on the black trunk. Charley bore the sword aloft in triumph, and Amy, assisted by Flora, carried the bandbox. So it fell to Bertie's lot to raise the trap-door, he being empty-handed; and he was the last one to pass down the ladder, closing it heavily after him.

"Shutting that door," he said, "was like getting into a chest, and pulling the lid down upon you. He never could do it without shuddering."

When he got down stairs, they had opened the bandbox and taken out Grandpa Lee's military hat and feather.

The hat was high-crowned, stiff, and black, the feather, a long white plume. There were ornaments and a bridle that had once been silvered, and there was a pair of epaulets in the box.

Amy fastened them to Charley's shoulders, and put the hat upon his head, but it would not stay there. It had dwelt so long in loving union with the epaulets, it could not endure a separation now. It drooped until it rested on Charley's shoulders, beside its long-cherished friends.

"Ho!" said Bertie, "you must get a bigger head."



Waiting for Twine.

F

“A smaller hat would do as well,” suggested Amy. “Try it on, Bertie.”

It looked very funny on Bertie’s small head ; but when Flora tried it on, it was a complete extinguisher. It put out her bright eyes, her light curls, and her rosy cheeks. How far it would have gone, if its stout roof had not held it in check, I cannot tell. Amy said she looked like a lightning-bug in a tumbler, by daylight.

“Or a little brown toad under a big flower-pot,” said Bertie.

They gave up the hat, — it was too heavy and clumsy — and Amy fastened the white feather into Charley’s cap, and tied the sash around his waist.

“There,” she said, “now you are quite a respectable soldier.”

With the sword hanging at his side and dragging upon the floor, he played captain until he was tired, and then gave up to

Bertie, who had been making music for the company.

When all were weary of the march, the hat and epaulets were restored to their places, and the bandbox and sword went up to the garret once more. Then Charley remembered that they did not find any twine in the drawer.

"I forgot that we were hunting for twine," said Amy; "let us begin all over again."

So they began all over again; but they could not remember for more than a minute at a time what they were seeking, they brought to light so many long-lost toys and trinkets.

"I declare," said Charley, "if here isn't that knife I lost last winter!"

"And look at this boxwood top!" exclaimed Bertie. "Now if we can only find the string!"

"That is my top," asserted Charley.

"No, sir," said Bertie.

“Then it is twin brother to mine. I lost one just like it.”

“But here is my mark.”

It required a sharp eye to detect Bertie's mark, for the top was battered and scarred; but Bertie was confident and Charley believing.

“What is this?”

Flora held a bright button between her thumb and forefinger, and to the button a long string was attached.

“Why, if the little pet has not found it the very first thing,” said Amy. “It is the top-string.”

“Hurrah!” said Bertie. “Now we will give her a spin.”

“That makes me think of the twine,” Amy observed, quietly. “We have not found that yet.”

And to work they went with fresh vigor, searching for the twine.

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Amy, snatching at a bead bag, minus lining and clasp, "isn't that a beauty! May I have it, grandma?"

Grandma glanced up over her spectacles and smiled.

"Yes, dear, you may have it. What a beauty it was once, to be sure! It was as gay as a butterfly in its day, which was a very long time ago, before I knew your grandfather. How we do change!" and grandma sighed.

"You were very gay when you were young; weren't you, grandma?"

"I was called so, child; I don't remember much about it myself."

"Here is the twine, Amy." Charley held up a generous ball.

"Where did you find it?"

"Right here, under our very noses," said Charley.

"We were as blind as bats," declared Ber-

tie. "We must have turned it over twenty times. I wonder it did not bite us."

And all this time the messages, half sent, were fluttering in the wind.

"Now we have the twine and the basket," said Charley; and that sent Amy's mind out of the window, and across the way to the telegraph.

"Look here," she exclaimed, "who knows what day to-morrow is?"

"I do," said Bertie.

"Well, what?"

"Sunday."

"What of it?" demanded Charley.

She pointed to the fluttering messages.

"That is a fact!" he exclaimed. "It wont do to leave them hanging there, and it is almost night now. Good-by, grandma."

"You are not going. What is your hurry, children?"

"We must go, grandma. We want to take

the rags off your clothes-line before dark," said Bertie.

"Oh, you rogue!"

Grandma shook a finger at him, and went to the cupboard. All eyes glistened expectant; and Flora said, in a loud whisper, "Gooseberry tarts!" and Flora was right.

"Take them in your hands, if you are in a hurry," said grandma; "here are just two apiece."

CHAPTER VIII.

CHARLEY STRIKES A BARGAIN.

THEY started off in single file, with a tart in each hand. Grandma went before to open the door, and waited to close it after them. Before they got across the street, she called to Charley, "I nearly forgot to mention what I wanted to see you about."

"Is it particular?" asked Charley.

"Very," said grandma.

"Then I will run over again after supper."

As they rounded the corner, and came in sight of Uncle Barney's woodpile, Amy placed her finger on her lips to signify that they must be silent, and pointed to the old man. He had laid down his saw, and his right hand was

turning an imaginary crank. With upturned eyes and smiling face, he seemed to behold a vision. Bertie carefully balanced his tarts on the top rail of the fence, and stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth, to keep from laughing aloud ; and Charley, biting first one lip and then the other, made such comical grimaces that Amy was afraid to look at him.

“He certainly is crazy,” Bertie whispered.
“What is he about?”

“I cannot imagine,” said Amy. “Perhaps by keeping still we shall find out.”

“He is turning a grindstone,” said Charley,
“but he looks very happy.”

“Don’t speak,” Amy whispered. But at this juncture Flora coughed.

“Hush!” said Amy.

Flora coughed again. Uncle Barney’s enraptured face was gone in an instant, — wiped out. It was as if you had rubbed the chalk marks from a black-board, or passed a wet

sponge across your slate. In a moment he was at work sawing wood as though he had never left off.

“What were you doing when we came up?” said Charley.

“What was I doing, Mr. Charley?”

“Yes, Uncle Barney.”

“What did I seem to be doing?”

“You were turning a crank or a grindstone or something,—so;” and Charley imitated the motion.

Uncle Barney chuckled.

“Yes,” he said, “I was turning a crank.”

“But what for?”

“What for?” echoed the old man.

“Yes, what did it mean?”

Uncle Barney chuckled again.

“Did you think it was a grindstone, Mr. Charley?”

“I thought it was.”

“Well, it wasn’t that.”

"What was it, then?"

"Wait a little longer," said Uncle Barney.

"Do you think we shall gain anything by waiting?" Amy asked.

"Yes, miss, I do, — sooner or later."

He spoke so seriously that Amy answered, "Oh! then it has something to do with the fortune."

"Yes, miss."

"Please to tell us what," urged Charley; "we never can wait."

But Uncle Barney could not be persuaded, and they turned away disappointed.

"There is nothing to be got by pumping a dry well," said Charley. "If the water is not there, you can't pump it out."

"What do you try for, then?" asked Amy.

"Because he almost makes me believe sometimes that he knows what he is talking about."

"He certainly is very much in earnest. A

streak of good luck may fall to his share yet."

They went back to the telegraph,—Amy and Flora to one station, Charley and Bertie to the other. A few turns of the spools, and the messages were delivered from their perilous position. Then Amy crossed over to Bertie's end of the line, and Flora went to mamma.

"It works pretty well," said Bertie, "but I wish we had time to hang the basket to-night. What do you suppose grandma wants of Charley?"

"We will go and see, if it is not private," returned Amy.

"I shouldn't wonder if it was something about chickens," said Charley; "I wish she would lend me a hen."

Flora was very tired, and fell asleep while eating her supper, so Amy waited to see her safely tucked into her little crib before she went over to see what grandma wanted of

Charley. It was something about chickens. The black pullet wanted to sit, and grandma offered to lend her to Charley.

"And now, dear," she said, carefully taking a box from the cupboard, "you will want some eggs. She can cover a baker's dozen comfortably. There will be as many left for you," she added, nodding pleasantly to Bertie.

"Never mind me, grandma ; I have given up the chicken business."

"Before ever going into it," said Amy.

"And I am much obliged for the eggs," said Charley ; "but I shall not need them. I have twenty now."

Grandma, quite surprised, looked up.

"I have been saving them all winter," he explained. "Don't you remember you used to give me two every morning ?"

"Yes, dear."

"Well, I ate one and kept the other."

"Bless the child !"

“Yes, and if they all hatch, and the cats don’t kill them, I shall have twenty chickens to sell to you in a few weeks.”

“Do hear the child go on! Does he really think old eggs will hatch?”

“*Old* eggs, grandma? They are fresh, every one; you told me so.”

“So they were, dear, when they were laid, but they don’t keep fresh forever.”

“I have taken real good care of them.”

But grandma shook her head. “Never set a hen on stale eggs. They must be fresh, and they must be handled carefully too. See here, I keep mine in this meal-box, so they cannot roll about, and take any harm.”

“Does it do any hurt to shake ’em up?”

“Spoils them,” said grandma; “they must be kept still.”

“Oh, dear!” exclaimed Charley, “then I may as well give up, and go out of the

chicken business with Bertie; for every one of mine has had a shaking up, I know. I never can do anything right," he added, consolately.

"There, there," said grandma, soothingly, "accidents will happen. Take these eggs and the black pullet, and begin anew. Put the barrel in a quiet place, and don't go nigh it any oftener than is necessary."

Charley did not appear to be quite satisfied.

"Old folks make mistakes sometimes as well as young ones," said grandma, cheerily; "we have to learn as we go along."

"But I don't like to take your eggs, grandma."

"Why, dear, I kept them a purpose for you. Where will you find fresher ones, or better?"

"It is not that, but —"

Charley stumbled over a few simple words;

they rose in his throat, but would not come when they were called. Neither would they go down when he tried to swallow them. They choked him, and brought the blood to his face and the tears to his eyes ; at last he got rid of them by a great effort.

“ I wanted to hatch out my own eggs. If I am going to sell chickens to you, it is not right for you to give them to me in the first place.”

“ La ! ” said grandma.

“ If you lend me the hen and give me the eggs, they will be yours anyhow. What is the use of my making believe sell them ? ”

“ I'll tell you what to do, Charley.”

“ What, Amy ? ”

“ Buy the eggs of grandma.”

“ May I ? ”

She could not deny him, his round black eyes pleaded so eloquently.

“ Why, yes, dear ; if it will do you any

good, you may pay for them." Grandma assumed a commercial air. "What do you consider them worth, now? Bird fanciers would give me a dollar a dozen."

"I have not so much money," said Charley, humbly, searching first one pocket, then another.

"Then I will take what you have," said grandma, generously.

Charley's jacket pocket produced a very dirty handkerchief. Nothing else. Judging from its appearance, it had been used for cleaning the mud from his shoes, and by no process of washing could it ever hope to be made white again. From his pants pocket he brought to light, first, a sun-glass; next, two pennies; then, in rapid succession, a knife, four marbles, a piece of chewing gum, a lump of lead, and a soiled wad of paper, which, upon being unrolled and carefully examined, proved to be a three cent piece of scrip.

"I didn't know I had that," he said, turning his pocket, and carefully inspecting the corners.

What he expected to discover in the dirt and lint that had collected there, is still a mystery.

"Five," said grandma, taking the pennies and the scrip.

"That is all," said Charley, "but I am three cents better off than I thought I was."

"I can let you have one egg for five cents."

Charley's countenance fell.

"Pay her in chickens," suggested Bertie.

That was a new idea, and Charley grasped at it.

"So I will; that is, if she will trust me. I will give you three chickens for twelve eggs."

"I have a better plan than that," said

grandma. "We will make an exchange. You may give me the twenty you have been keeping all winter, and take fourteen of these. That will be a fair exchange and no robbery."

"But mine wont hatch."

Grandma smiled.

"I want them for quite another purpose," she said. "Is it a bargain?"

"Yes," said Charley, heartily.

"Let us shake hands on it."

They shook hands, and Charley, unsuspecting of grandma's stratagem, tucked the black pullet under his arm; and Amy walked behind him, carrying the eggs.

They made a nest in a barrel, with some straw, and tenderly placed the eggs side by side. The pullet was cross, and scolded Charley all the way home, and she sputtered louder than ever when he attempted to put her in the barrel; but he kept good-natured,

and made no reply to her complaints. He left her to smooth her ruffled feathers, and settle herself into a comfortable position, and wrote down the date on a slip of paper.

CHAPTER IX.

A PLEASANT RECOLLECTION.

YOU had better give me that paper," said Amy; "you will be sure to lose it."

"No, I wont."

"If you crumple it up that way, and put it in your pocket, you will forget that it is a memorandum, and we cannot tell when to look for the chickens."

"It is a memorandum; isn't it?"

Charley smoothed out the creases, and surveyed it with new interest.

"To be sure it is, and it ought to be taken care of."

"I have got a pocket-book somewhere," he mused; "I suppose I might keep it in that."

Charley had little use for a pocket book, and he could not remember where he saw it last, so he concluded not to look for it. Then he read the date aloud :—

“ May the 10th. Three weeks seem a good while to wait, Amy.”

“ So it does,” affirmed Bertie. “ You wont catch me in no hen business.”

“ It will be summer when they come out,” said Amy, “ and Saturday. That is lucky.”

“ It will be the last day of spring,” said Charley, counting the days on his fingers. “ We can remember that, if we do lose the paper.” But he folded it up, and put it in his pocket. “ Now, Bertie, you must promise to keep away from the black pullet for three weeks. We must not disturb her.”

“ I shall not tread on the old lady’s toes,” said Bertie. “ She is too cross for my taste.”

"And we have something more important to attend to."

"That's so, Amy. I wish it was Monday morning."

"What a boy you are! You haven't one bit of patience. You don't want to jump right over Sunday; do you?"

"Yes, I do. I would jump over it, or through it," said Bertie, recklessly. "It comes altogether too often. One Sunday in two weeks would just suit me."

"Oh, Bertie! how you do talk! What would Miss Lamb say?"

"I don't care."

"Yes, you do," said Charley; "you would feel real bad if I should tell her."

"You wouldn't be so mean."

"No, I would not; but I don't see what you have got against her. She is the pleasantest teacher we ever had."

"Don't I know that? I like to go to Sab-

bath-school well enough, only I wish it didn't come on Sunday. Then we could play the rest of the day, and have some fun. Now we have to go to church, and it is so still in the house. Nobody ever does anything Sunday."

"They do sometimes," said Charley.

"Yes; and wasn't it refreshing?" Bertie laughed aloud at the pleasant recollection. "It made *such* a stir! Biddy chased me with the broom because I joked her about it."

"What was it?" Amy asked.

"A pot of baked beans, smash on the kitchen floor, about dinner time! That's what it was. I tell you we had fun! The pot was slippery, and Biddy didn't have a good hold. She felt it going, but could not save it, and *such* a racket as it made! We were in the dining-room, and it sounded like a volcano."

"You have a good memory," said Charley, gravely.

“Why, it was only last Sunday!”

“About the volcano, — how long is it since you heard one?”

“Oh, I thought you meant the beans. It is sometime since I heard one. It was so long ago I don't remember much about it. Come to think of it, I believe I never did hear one. But it was a stunner! We rushed out, and there stood Biddy, crying over the beans, and wringing her hands.”

“If they were not well salted before, they got a dose then, you had better believe,” said Charley. “Such a mess! You couldn't tell which was crockery, and which was beans. We turned to and helped shovel it up, but we didn't get no beans for dinner that day.”

“Nota bene?” said Amy, laughing.

“Not a beanny,” asserted Charley.

Bertie did not want Sunday to interfere with his plans. It was coming so soon, before the telegraph could be completed. He wanted

to keep Sunday off until he could hang the basket, and see how it would work. He had no patience to carry him smoothly over the day that placed a check upon his freedom. If it had been further off, he thought, he should not have cared.

But the dreaded day proved to be a very pleasant one. After the struggle of Saturday night, he gave up wishing and fretting, and the balmy Sabbath, scented with the perfume of many blossoms, subdued while it gladdened his heart; and although thoughts of the telegraph stole across his mind,—not once in Sabbath-school, but many times during service in the church,—they left no vain regrets.

Monday morning found him wide awake, and fresh. He was up and dressed while Charley was yet sleeping. He went to the window, and took a peep at his telegraph, but Amy's curtains were drawn.

"Holloa!" he cried.

There was no response from Amy. She was sleeping serenely, unmindful of telegraphs and sunshiny mornings; but Charley called out lustily, —

"Stop your noise; will you?"

Bertie tried the spool.

"It will turn," he murmured, "but it goes awful hard when there is nobody at the other end. I guess I will do it."

So he prepared a message and tied it to one of the lines. He was thinking it would be nice for Amy to find a message at her window so early in the morning.

"Pull down that shade," growled Charley, sleepily.

"What is your hurry?" said Bertie.

The spool worked hard, and he concluded not to send the message.

"On the whole, I guess I wont," he whispered. And he pulled down the shade to

keep the sun from peeping in to see what a lazy fellow Charley was.

It seemed to him that everybody was lazy but himself. It was unusual for Bertie to rise so early, but he did not consider that. He could not help muttering, as he left the chamber where Charley was so sweetly sleeping, "Lazy bones."

On his way down stairs he looked into the parlor, and he went into the kitchen. Both were deserted. Even Biddy had not come down. Then he went out to the barn and the chicken house, and he ventured to approach the barrel where the black pullet was sitting. But he did not go very near, for her ladyship warned him to keep his distance.

"Don't distress yourself, my dear," he said ;
"I did not mean to hurt your feelings."

Roaming around alone was dull music, so he went up stairs again, to see if Charley

would not get up. But Charley wouldn't; and he was so cross at being disturbed that Bertie determined to have some sport. So he kept very quiet, to give Charley a chance to drop off again, and then applied the feather torture.

He touched the tip of his ear very gently, but that made no impression; so he made a bold thrust, which irritated the sleeper somewhat, but not sufficient for his tormentor's purpose. Then he leaned over him cautiously, and tickled his nose.

Charley's hand came up so promptly that Bertie had not time to dodge, and he received a stinging blow plump on his nose, which smarted and protested against the indignity. And now Charley was fairly awake.

"You had better try that again," he said, laughing at Bertie, who was holding on with both hands, as if it required all his strength to keep his nose from running away.

“No, I thank you, once is quite sufficient,” replied Bertie, trying to wink back the tears.

“I have no objections.”

“But I have.”

“Did it hurt much?”

“So that I felt it,” returned Bertie, who could joke as the pain was subsiding; “but I forgive you.”

“That being the case, I will get up and dress,” said Charley, coolly.

CHAPTER X.

AMY'S IMPROVEMENT.

AFTER breakfast the children had two hours before school time. "Intermission," Bertie called it, but Amy told him that play-time in the morning was not intermission.

He could not see why, and desired to know, if it was not intermission, what they called it.

"It is not recess," said Charley.

"No ;" Amy acknowledged it was not recess.

"Nor vacation."

No, it was neither recess nor vacation ; but it was not intermission. That came in the middle of the day, not at morning or evening.

"Anyhow," said Charley, "it is going, whatever it is; hurry up;" and they hastened to improve the passing moments. Amy brought out the basket and the ball of twine. Bertie wound off a part of the twine, and he and Amy dropped the two strings from the windows as they did before, while Charley waited in the street below to tie the ends together.

"Don't forget to put the basket on before you make the knot," said Amy. "Slip one line through before you tie."

"I know," said Charley.

Little Flora wanted to help, so she was stationed to keep a sharp look-out, and give Charley warning of passing carriages; for milk carts and wagons were rolling briskly through the street, and he needed the caution.

"Look out!" chirped Flora, just as he had both lines in his hand.

He dropped them and ran to the sidewalk,

but there was no vehicle near, either up street or down.

“What do you mean, Flora?” he asked, somewhat tartly.

She pointed to a retreating wagon, almost out of sight.

“You must not speak when it is so far off,” said Amy. “If you think the horse is going to run over Charley, you must call out as quick as you can.”

“I will,” said Flora.

Charley hung the basket, and tied a square knot; then he told them to pull her in. He watched the basket as it slowly rose. They pulled in with a hearty good-will. Suddenly a shout sent him flying out of the road.

“Is the doctor hard up for a job, or are you partial to mince meat?”

Charley looked up. There was the man who stopped to inspect the telegraph the Saturday before, and his wagon stood on the spot

he had that moment vacated. How it came there, he could not imagine. He was completely bewildered.

"Why," he stammered, "where did you come from?"

"I can answer that question better than you can this. Where were *you* bound when you made love to my horse's heels?"

"I didn't hear a sound," said Charley.

"Not till I sung out?"

"No, sir."

"I might have kept my noise to myself. What would have happened then?"

"I am very much obliged to you for not running over me," said Charley, gratefully.

"Not at all,—not at all," answered the man, politely. "You have got eyes and ears?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you ever use them?"

Charley thought the man was quizzing him.

"I do sometimes," he replied.

"Not always? Then you are a very careless lad."

"It was not all my fault, sir; I had somebody on the look-out, so I did not keep it on my mind."

"Never make use of other people's eyes and ears until your own give out. Can you remember that?"

"I will try, sir."

"What are you doing with that basket,—making improvements?"

"Yes, sir;" and he explained how difficult it was to turn the spools when the twine was drawn so tightly round them, and how long it took to transmit a message. The man, who was a fat man, laughed heartily. Charley knew that he was laughing, because he could see the fat shake. It quivered like a mould of jelly. But when he looked into his face, it did not seem to have anything to do with it;

it was quite composed, and not laughing at all.

He stopped a moment longer and questioned Charley about the working of the basket, and then he drove along. After he was gone, Charley called to Flora. He could see the top of her pretty head above the level of the window-seat, but she thought she was hid from view. She slowly lifted her head, when Charley called, till her black eyes peeped over the edge.

"You are a pretty watchman!" he cried, and the black eyes disappeared.

"Come out of that," said Charley, and the eyes peeped over the edge again.

"Why didn't you sing out?" he demanded.

"I did."

"That is a story."

"Sister told me not to."

"No, dear," said Amy.

"Yes, you did, you 'vised me not to."

"I told you to speak if the horse was going to run over Charley."

"But it wasn't," asserted Flora.

"I am glad to hear that," said Charley; "I thought it was."

"No," persisted Flora; "I looked when he came along. He was a clever horse, and wouldn't run over anybody."

"Did you think he was too good to run over Charley?"

"Yes," said Flora.

Amy patted her light curls, and then she told Bertie to slacken his string. She pulled the basket to her window, and fastened it with a loop to the old line. Then she dropped an orange into it, and told Bertie to pull. The basket fairly danced along the line. It slid along so easily that they were all delighted; and such a shouting as there was, and clapping of hands!

“Hurrah for the basket!” said Bertie. So they gave three cheers for the basket and three for the telegraph, then three more for Amy’s improvement. They made such a noise that grandma came out to see what was the matter. Charley pointed to the basket, and gave a cheer and a tiger.

“It runs so easily, Flora can manage it,” said Bertie.

And then Flora wanted to try, and the messages danced to and fro until mamma called, “School-time.”

“Oh!” said Charley, regretfully.

But there was no help for it; they had to leave the telegraph and prepare for school. But it was on Bertie’s mind all the morning. It got mixed up with his lessons, so that he studied telegraph, and when his class was called up, he could recite nothing else. So he came to grief, and had to pass down to the foot of his row.

Charley was more fortunate. He thought as much about it as Bertie did, but it was not so thoroughly mixed up with other ideas. It had a corner to itself, and did not encroach upon lessons and recitations. When geography was called, it answered to its name. Telegraph did not come forward, so he got along bravely. Of course Amy was too mature to be disturbed by such a trifle, — she was a year older than Charley, — and Flora, who was too young to go to school, amused herself by sending messages to imaginary persons ; and all the morning trotted up stairs and down, from one house to the other, acting as operator at both ends of the line. She would draw the basket to one window and deposit her message, then run across the street and up to the other window, and pull the basket over. She was quite weary of the exercise when school was done, and her elders enjoyed undisputed possession of the line. Never was telegraph more liber

ally patronized, and never did wires carry such a medley under the general head of messages. If Charley carelessly left his jacket across the way, it was restored to him by telegraph, and Flora's doll was sent home in the same manner. Everything was a message.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STORM THAT STOPPED THE TELEGRAPH.

THE telegraph prospered for a time, but, like its rich and lofty relation, the electric telegraph, it was extremely sensitive, and dependent upon outside influences. It required a clear atmosphere, and if there was any jarring of the elements, it was out of spirits in a moment, and had no courage to work.

At first, there was nothing to offend its sensitive temperament, and from station to station the basket glided, conveying messages steadily and surely.

But one day there came a change. Amy was away, and Charley had sole charge of her

office. He invited Uncle Barney in to witness the telegraph in "full blow," as he expressed it; and he also desired him to see what a smart operator Charley was, but he did not mention that. He had a weakness for showing off whenever there was opportunity, and now, here was a rare chance, — a clear coast, Amy gone away, and Uncle Barney for a spectator. Bertie was at the other station.

There was some delay in getting the telegraph under way, but why there should have been I cannot imagine, for the basket was at Charley's window; all he had to do was to deposit a message and send it across; but he skirmished a little before coming down to the work. He sent the empty basket half-way over, and drew it back again, giving orders to Bertie in a pompous tone, and flourishing about a great deal more than was necessary. The simple old man looked on with a boy's delight.

"Look out, Uncle Barney, it cannot move with your foot on the line ;" and Uncle Barney quickly stepped off the end of the long string attached to the basket, which Charley was pulling in.

"It takes some time to get under way, I mind."

"Why, yes," said Charley, "it does a little. We are ready now, I believe. Look sharp, Bertie !"

He dropped the message into the basket, and Bertie must have looked sharp, for it went over smoothly and quickly.

Uncle Barney laughed. Bertie sent a return message, and then the little basket flew briskly to and fro for a few minutes.

"There," said Charley, leaning upon the window-seat and wiping his face, as if he had labored hard, "what do you think of *that* !"

"It is an invention," declared Uncle Barney, Charley assented with a satisfied nod.

“ You call it so yourself, Mr. Charley ? ”

“ Well, yes, Uncle Barney, I do. It takes a long head for these matters.”

“ Ay, ay, and a young one.”

Charley did not say, “ The long head was Bertie’s.” He ought to have done so, but he allowed Uncle Barney to believe what was not true, — that the credit belonged to him.

“ Try it, Uncle Barney,” Bertie called from the other side, — “ try it and see how easy it is.”

“ Yes,” said Charley, “ you had better.”

So Uncle Barney placed a message in the basket, and followed Charley’s simple direction to just let the line run out of his hand as Bertie pulled it in.

“ Why, is that all ? ” he asked, as Bertie took the message from the basket.

“ It is as easy as rolling off a log,” said Bertie. “ Now it is your turn to pull in.”

Uncle Barney enjoyed the sport as much as

Charley and Bertie did, and the eagerness with which he watched the basket as it danced along the line amused the boys very much.

“Now,” said Bertie, “here is something. Play it was your fortune coming to you by telegraph.”

“It will not come that way, Mr. Bertie,” he answered, seriously, “and I cannot play it. When it do come, it will be for sure.”

“Do you expect it soon?”

“It may come to-day, or any day. Perhaps when I am sleeping, it will be rapping at the door.”

“I hope it will not get tired of rapping, and walk away before you wake up.”

“No, Mr. Bertie, it cannot very well do that. One eye is always open to the fortune.”

“When you are asleep?”

“When I sleep and when I wake, it is all the same,—one eye is always open to the fortune.”

"Stop your talk there, Mr. Operator, and mind the wires," called out Charley.

"Here is a message to go over."

"Start her along," said Bertie, pleasantly, "and I will send you a penny for your politeness."

"What are you about?" Charley demanded, in no very pleasant tone, when the basket was on the way.

"Hey?" said Bertie.

"What are you about, I say?"

"And I say, what has crossed your grain?"

"The basket rocks and dips as though it was going to upset. You don't know how to manage it."

"Don't I?"

"No."

"Then I may as well stop."

"Pull her steady."

"Look here," said Bertie, winding the string that controlled the basket tightly around the

spool that was nailed to the window-sill. "I have stood your nonsense as long as I intend to. Who is the owner of this telegraph?"

"Pull her over!" ordered Charley.

"I shall not do it. Is this your telegraph or mine?"

"It is as much mine as yours," retorted Charley, tugging at the string. "If you will not pull the line in, let go of it."

"I shall do neither." Bertie coolly folded his arms. "Help yourself, if you can."

Charley pulled and tugged at the string, and asked Uncle Barney to help him, but he declined to interfere.

"This line belongs to Amy and me, asserted Bertie, and you want to order me round. You wouldn't dare to do it, if she was here."

"Wouldn't I?"

"No, sir. Amy would put a stop to it. You can pull away as hard as you please, but if you break it, you will be sorry."

Charley was convinced that Bertie had the advantage; and as the twine was strong, he could not break it. He would gladly have spoiled Bertie's telegraph, he was so angry. He expended a good deal of force on the twine, and he cut his hands. He held them up so that Bertie could see the blood upon them, and shook his head, as if to say, "There, you did that!"

"So much for flying to pieces," said Bertie, "but I am sorry."

"Keep your sorry until it is wanted," growled Charley, winding his handkerchief about his bleeding right hand. "Are you going to let me have that basket, or not?"

"Not," said Bertie.

"I want to send a message."

"The office is shut up. No more messages can go to-night."

Charley started to go down stairs. Uncle Barney laid a hand upon his arm.

“Where are you bound, Mr. Charley?”

“I am going over to take the starch out of that brother of mine.”

“No, Mr. Charley, leave him be. You have been a little hard on him. Is it true what he says, — that it is his line?”

“Yes, Uncle Barney; we call it his, and I suppose it is.”

“Then leave him alone with it. He has a right to his own. A bad temper is poor company for a body.”

“I have not a bad temper,” said Charley, quickly; yet he felt the truth of Uncle Barney’s words. He was quite ashamed of the display he had made, and he tried to banish his ugly feelings.

“It is all over now,” he said, looking up to Uncle Barney with a smile, “I shall not get angry again.”

And thus ended the storm that stopped the working of the telegraph.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BLACK PULLET BREAKS UP.

IT was a severe storm and the only one that had ever threatened the safety of the telegraph. Others there had been,—squalls that quickly passed and sun-showers that were soon over, but there had never been a storm like that. For three weeks the telegraph had but little rest. Numberless messages were sent and received, and the little basket, never weary, faithfully performed its task. But towards the close of the third week the tide turned, and business became dull. A few scattering messages wended their way from station to station, but the rush was over, and the little basket, safely moored, swung in the wind which rocked it fitfully, sometimes with

soothing murmurs, often with rough, rude touch. For many days its quiet was not disturbed. It made not a single journey, not a message was intrusted to its care. As if it knew the dulness could not last, it swung and waited patiently.

What was the cause of the sudden change? Where were Bertie and Amy, Charley and wee Flora? Let the black pullet answer, for the black pullet was the cause. If we go down to the chicken house, we shall find our young friends hovering near the barrel where she has been sitting for almost three weeks. Other hens have imitated her example; two of the new family keep her company, and Charley feels like a business man. But his interest centres in the black pullet. He has watched her closely, but he has taken care to treat her tenderly. He has never disturbed her, and only once or twice ventured quite near her nest, when the pretty brown eggs

were left for a moment unprotected. Once he softly touched them; they were warm. It was almost time for the chickens to break the shell. In two days more, Charley thought, he would have a fine brood. So the telegraph was for a season neglected. Everybody was interested in the black pullet. But she did not deserve their kind attention. She was cross and surly, ruffling her feathers, and scolding whenever any one approached. For the sake of her expected brood, everybody was very patient and forbearing, keeping out of her sight as much as possible. But they could not stay away from the barrel; they wanted to be within hearing of the first peep, peep, that should issue from it. The next day was showery. Banks of black clouds rolled up from the horizon, and the thunder growled and muttered. Charley consulted the sky, but it gave no promise of fair weather, so he started forth to look after

the welfare of the black pullet. A crashing peal and a blinding flash sent him staggering back again. He hurried in and bolted the door, as if he would thus keep out the danger and the terror.

"Wasn't that a crasher?" said Bertie, meeting him in the hall; "it must have struck somewhere."

"It was awful!" gasped Charley. "I hope that was the worst one."

It proved to be. A few more peals, and the thunder died away, and the sun came out and made rainbows in the drops that glistened on the trees.

"Now, I will try it again," said Charley, putting on his hat and going out. "It didn't look much like this an hour ago."

"Not much," said Bertie. "You looked awful pale when you came in."

"I was scared," confessed Charley. "I thought the lightning had struck me. It

seemed as if I was in a sea of fire. I hope the black pullet didn't suffer."

"I guess she is all right," said Bertie; "I will go with you and see."

They approached the barrel cautiously and listened, then crept stealthily round to the opening, and Charley looked in.

"What is it?" cried Bertie, as Charley started back.

"She is not there. I am afraid she has gone off."

"She wouldn't do that. She is about here somewhere. Let's hunt her up."

But they could not find the black pullet anywhere.

"She never has been off long at a time," said Charley, "and perhaps she will come back again."

"Of course she will, unless she was struck by lightning, and then I suppose we should find the feathers."

They waited five minutes,—ten; but she did not come back, and Charley felt that something must be done.

“She has gone!” he sobbed, as the conviction settled down upon him. “My nice brood of chickens, they were coming out to-morrow. It is too bad!”

“Don't cry, Charley; we can do something. Of course she has not run away; she wouldn't be such a fool.”

“The eggs are all cold.”

Bertie put his hand into the nest. “They are not cold, Charley,—feel! They are as hot as pudding now!”

Charley eagerly laid his hand upon them. “I wish I knew what to do,” he said. “Anyhow, I will keep them warm until I find out;” and taking off his jacket, he folded it and carefully covered the eggs.

“I'll tell you what I would do,” declared Bertie.

“What?”

“Peel ’em out.”

Charley shook his head.

“The time is up to-morrow!”

“Yes, but that will not do.”

“I’d try it.”

“We must try something else first.
Where is Uncle Barney?”

“In the shed, if he is not outside.”

He was in the shed.

“Oh, what shall I do?” said Charley; “the black pullet has left the nest.”

Uncle Barney laid down his hatchet and drew the back of his hand across his mouth.

“Mayhap she will come home to it.”

“I am afraid she wont; she has been off some time. Can’t you tell me what to do? My chickens! I shall lose them, every one.” And Charley could not help crying again.

“It is too bad, Mr. Charley; I wish I could help you. If ’twas a tree now, or a posey —”

"Isn't there some way of hatching them out without a hen?" demanded Bertie.

"That is what we want to know."

Uncle Barney was uncertain. If there was, he had not heard of it. He could not help them except by being sorry, and he felt very sorry indeed.

"Grandma is the next thing," said Charley. "If she cannot help us, we may as well sink the anchor." And he began to cry again.

Charley was not accountable for his words, because his heart was so full of grief. He had an idea that sinking the anchor was the same thing as sinking the ship. Bertie tried to comfort him.

"Don't take on so, Charley," he said; "I never would sink the anchor."

"I cannot help it, Bertie; I have waited and waited, and to-morrow —"

He could not finish the sentence. His mind's eye beheld the black pullet strutting

about with fourteen yellow chickens for company.

“Bless the child!” exclaimed grandma, holding up both hands at sight of Charley’s swollen eyes. “Come right to grandma, and tell her all about it.”

Bertie told the tale, for Charley could not; but grandma’s cheering answer comforted him.

“That clap of thunder broke her up; but wipe up, dear, — don’t cry; we will hatch them out ourselves.”

“Can we?” he asked, eagerly.

“To be sure, we can, if the eggs are not cold. You ought to have thrown something over them right away, to keep the heat in.”

“I did!” exclaimed Charley, delighted.

“Then we are safe. That is, we can save some of them. We don’t expect them all to hatch under the circumstances, do we, Charley?”

“No, grandma. If I can have one chicken, just to see what they would have been, I shall be satisfied.”

“And you wont sink the anchor?” Bertie whispered.

“No, Bertie, not yet.”

CHAPTER XIII.

CHARLEY'S ORPHAN ASYLUM.

GRANDMA bustled about, preparing a basket to receive the deserted eggs. She filled it with warm wool, and calling upon the boys to follow, caught her bonnet and walked off at a brisk pace.

“The grass is wet,” said Charley, warningly; “you ought not to go. Think of your rheumatism.”

“Tut, tut, Charley. If the old tyrant will let me alone, I will not waste my time thinking of him, I’ll warrant ye.”

“But I am afraid he wont let you alone, if you go through that wet grass.”

“Hush, dear! He may be loitering round

somewhere. I would not have him hear you for a kingdom. Speak softly, dear, and he will pass me by."

"Did you ever hatch out any chickens yourself, grandma?" Bertie queried, earnestly.

"La! dear, dozens of 'em. When I was a girl, and lived on a farm, there was always something happening. I have hatched out many a motherless brood in the oven, and it is wonderful the turkeys I have nursed. Talk about chickens! Turkeys are the discouragingest things,—always wandering off into the tall grass, and being fetched home, drabbled and half dead, to be brought to and put on their legs again. Sometimes I couldn't bring 'em to, but I did mostly. Here we are."

She put her hand under Charley's jacket and felt of the eggs. "We shall get some live chickens out of these," she said, encouragingly, in answer to his anxious face. "She has not

been off long." With the gentlest touch, she transferred them to the basket, and covered them with the soft wool. "I'm sorry we had to disturb them," she said. "It would have been better to take the nest into the house."

"Now, what are you going to do?"

"All we can do now, dear, is to keep them warm awhile."

"To-morrow is the day, grandma."

"Yes, Charley, but they may not come out to-morrow."

"I wish you would let me peel out just one," implored Bertie. "May I?"

But grandma had the bereft chickens on her mind, and did not answer. She placed the basket in a warm corner behind the stove, and thrust a bundle of wool into Charley's hand, saying, —

"Here, dear, heat this through while I am pulling off my wet shoes and stockings."

Charley obeyed instructions, holding it

over the fire until grandma came out of the bedroom dry and comfortable, then she laid it upon the eggs, and piled light covers over it.

“There, dear, that is all we can do now. To-night I will set the basket in the oven; that will not cool off before morning.”

Charley watched the basket anxiously, and was unwilling to leave it when school time came; but grandma coaxed and soothed him, telling him that the hours would pass more quickly if he attended to his duties, and reminded him that to-morrow was a holiday.

So Charley went; but when school was done, he ran all the way home to inquire if anything had happened, and the next morning took his station by the basket, determined to remain until the fate of his chickens was decided.

But the day was warm, and the kitchen stove as well, and Charley's quarters were not the most comfortable. Besides, he sat

where he could see Amy, Flora, and Bertie at play under the shady cherry-trees. They kept running in at intervals with the inquiry, "Any hatched yet?"

Charley got tired of saying no, and he became tired of watching the little basket of wool that gave forth no sign of life or motion; and the pleasant shade outside grew more and more attractive; so before noon he arrived at the conclusion that he might as well be at play with the rest, and grandma promised to call him if anything happened.

"Did you ever know a hen to act so bad before?" inquired Amy, who got the news from Uncle Barney.

"I don't know that I ever heard of one breaking up so late," replied grandma; "but a sudden shock is apt to upset them."

"I hope they will hatch, for Charley's sake."

"I think they will, dear. At least, some of

the forrardest ones will, and then he must feed them and care for them until one of the other broods is hatched. The chickens will run together well enough."

"What was that, grandma?"

Grandma listened.

"There, don't you hear it?"

Grandma's ear was dull, and she did not hear it.

"It certainly was a chick!" exclaimed Amy. "I heard it singing!"

"How I wish I was not deaf," said grandma, smilingly; "in my day chickens were not singing birds."

•

She lifted a corner of the warm cover.

"Yes, Amy, here are two yellow birds. Call Charley."

Charley's black eyes stuck out as if they were going to burst, and he eagerly inspected the downy babies.

Bertie and Flora hung about the basket, and

could hardly wait for a sight of them ; and Flora, not being satisfied with a sight, wanted to squeeze one in her two little hands, and kiss it ; and when the privilege was denied her, jumped up and down and cried, and looked quite ugly ; for her pretty features were twisted out of shape, and her sweet face was swollen and flushed. It took some time to quiet the young lady ; but grandma's new milk and plum cake finally conquered, and she consented to look at the chickens, and not touch them, when she knew she would be allowed to view them on no other terms.

They watched the basket, but at the end of two hours there were only two chickens ; and grandma provided new quarters for them, and prepared some moistened meal for their supper, which Charley fed out to them. Then, for the first time, Bertie regretted having given up the hen business.

There were no additions made to the 'little

family that night, — Charley called the new nest his orphan asylum, — but the next morning three more had escaped from their prison-house, and five chickens gladdened Charley's heart. That was all ; and at the proper time Bertie had the pleasure of peeling the unprofitable eggs. These yielded but four dead chickens ; the black pullet herself could never have hatched the rest.

Charley's orphans grew and prospered. In due time other chickens were hatched to him, but they were not the chickens of his adoption. They had mothers to scratch for them and brood over them ; these, but for Charley, would have been exposed to the cold charity of the world. He carried them through the tender stage of early infancy, and his reward was their perfect confidence in his fostering care. They flew upon him and ate from his hand, while to the black pullet, who so cruelly deserted them, they remained ever strangers.

PLATE 132

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HEAVY MESSAGE.

WHEN the chicken fever abated, the telegraph revived ; and messages danced along the line once more. But the faithful little basket was soon discarded, and a larger, stouter one, with a cover to it, hung in its place.

The operators desired to try experiments. The little basket was an old story, they craved something new ; so the big basket crowded out the little one.

“ Now you begin to talk,” said Charley, approvingly, smiling on the new-comer. “ This is just the checker. It would carry me over easy.”

"Oh, no!" said Amy.

"It is strong enough."

Amy said "No," again.

"Well, it is strong enough to hold Flora, anyhow. I wish we could try it."

"Try what?"

"Sending Flora over in the basket."

"You are not in earnest?"

"Yes, I am."

"Why, Charley Waters! you are crazy! Supposing the line should break!"

"Supposing the sky should fall?"

"But it wont."

"Neither will the line break."

"I don't believe it will, with her weight," returned Amy.

"Can't she go?"

"No," said Amy.

"I think you are real mean!"

"I will tell you what we might do," interposed Bertie.

"What?" said Charley.

"We might send the cat across."

"Good! We will."

"Don't!" pleaded Amy.

"We will too. You are down on everything we want to do."

"That is not fair," said Bertie. "Of course she would not be willing to risk Flora."

"But the cat, she need not be so particular about that. Besides, it wont hurt her if she does fall, it will only kill her once, and she has got to die nine times. It would be a mercy to her."

"I don't believe you could get her into the basket," said Amy.

"Pooh!" returned Charley, contemptuously, "I could do it alone. All you have got to do is to pop her in, and tie the cover down."

"And I am here to help," suggested Bertie.

"Yes, and Bertie is here to help."

"I thought you could do it alone."

"So I can, if she behaves herself, but if she will not listen to reason, here is Bertie, and — you."

"You need not count me," responded Amy, hastily; "I am on the other side. If I help, it will be pussy, and not you."

"Let's hunt her up, any way, Bertie."

"Well," said Bertie.

"If I meet her, I will tell her you are looking for her," Amy called, as they left the room.

"Now, Amy," — and Charley came back, — "you wont be cruel; will you?"

"No," said Amy.

"And you wont play any tricks on us?"

"No, Charley, I wont play any tricks on you; but I will not have anything to do with it. You will frighten pussy to death."

"That will be another mercy; she will only

have to die seven times after that. But, seriously, Amy, I don't intend to frighten her; I will explain the matter to her before she starts."

Amy waited until she saw Charley returning with pussy under his arm, and then she left the window.

"I cannot bear to see the poor thing tortured," she said. "How I do wish boys were not always up to mischief!"

She went into her mother's chamber, and peeped through the blinds. She did not want to look, and yet she could not keep away. She could see and hear all that was going on, herself unseen.

"Now, my beauty," said Charley, stroking pussy's sleek fur, "I promised to explain the matter, and I am a man of my word. I am going to give you a ride, and you must be very gentle, and behave like a lady. Will you?"

Pussy purred, and rubbed her head against Charley's jacket. "She says she will, Bertie."

"That is a good catty. You are to ride in a close carriage, because you are an invalid, you know, and you cannot enjoy the prospect because the curtains will be drawn. But that is to prevent you from taking cold in your head. You wont try to roll them up?"

Pussy continued to purr, and she stretched out one handsome paw, and laid it upon Charley's hand. It was as soft as velvet.

"She says she wont, Bertie."

"That is a good catty again. Now open the door."

Bertie raised the cover, and Charley attempted to drop kitty into the basket; but the paw that had been velvet, and the mate to it, clung to his jacket, and he could not shake them off.

"Wait a minute, Bertie; she is not quite ready."

Puss wanted to run away, but Charley held her fast, and tried to restore her confidence by stroking her back and scratching her chin, but she was suspicious; it was a long time before he succeeded in soothing her.

“Don’t you like to ride?” he asked. “A handsome pussy like you should keep her own carriage. Now, will you try again?”

“Mew,” answered pussy.

“She says she will try again, Bertie. Is the door open?”

“You must look out for her claws this time,” said Bertie. “Hold them in your hand when you push her in, and don’t let go the cover until I tie it down.”

Pussy went in, but not without a remonstrance. She left a long, deep scratch on Charley’s hand.

“Now, be quick, Bertie,” he urged, pressing upon the cover with all his strength. “Her head is coming out, and we shall lose her.”

But after much struggling and striving, the head was thrust back, and the cover was securely tied. Pussy was in prison. Her cries were pitiful. Amy heard them, and de-claimed against the outrage.

“It is a perfect shame!” she declared. “I hope she will break the whole thing down!”

Pussy begged to be let out. “I don’t care about the ride,” she said; “I am not as sick as I was, but I am very much frightened, and I cannot breathe. Please to let me out.”

The basket swung heavily, and the strain upon the line was so great that Charley feared it might snap, and he told Bertie to hurry and draw it over. Bertie had to run across to the other station, and although he made all the haste possible, it was some minutes before he began to pull upon the line, and by that time, pussy had changed her tone. She said, —

“I am very much frightened, but I also am very angry, and I *will* get out. Now I am in

earnest, and if you do not open the door, I will smash your fine carriage."

Her weight slackened the line so much, that the basket did not glide along as smoothly as usual, and pussy's cries became louder and more pitiful.

"Pull a little harder, Bertie; try to get her over before that carriage comes along. She is making such a row."

"Perhaps she is complaining of the road," returned Bertie; "it is a little rough."

"Rough!" exclaimed Amy, who could keep away no longer, and who caught the last word; "I should think it was rough! It is infamous! perfectly outrageous! Poor pussy!"

"She isn't hurt a bit," retorted Charley; "she is making a great fuss about nothing. I wish she would stop her noise till that carriage gets by. Pull, Bertie."

"The twine will certainly break," said Amy. "Why! what is the matter with your hand?"

"Oh, that was given me by her catship, — a token of affection.

'When this you see, remember me.'

"It was very kind of her," declared Amy, heartily; "I am glad of it."

"Thank you," said Charley.

"I only wish it had been ten times worse."

"Thank you, again; but she need not have taken the trouble. I could have remembered her very well without it."

"But now, you will never forget her."

"Not while I wear this touching token."

CHAPTER XV.

BERTIE'S LOSS AND GAIN.

THE words were barely spoken, when snap went the line. "By George!" exclaimed Charley, as the end slipped through his fingers, while Bertie staggered back with a remnant of twine in his hand.

The trio stared at each other with blank faces, every vestige of color and expression stricken out by the sudden shock. The basket and its ill-starred freight dropped, but not in unison. Pussy's frantic struggles burst her bonds, and she was free to wing her strange flight.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Charley, "we have done it now, and there is the carriage right under the window!"

Amy looked out. There it was, arrived in season to break the force of pussy's fall. She alighted on the top of the carriage, bounded off, struck the ground with her feet, and scampered away as fast as her legs would carry her. Amy, who expected to see her dashed to pieces, felt a sensation of joy in spite of the situation. The light basket, with line attached and cover swinging, flitted before the eyes of the horse and startled him. He shied, made a mad spring forward, trampling the offence beneath his feet, and tearing both lines of the telegraph from their moorings.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Charley. "Hold on!" while Bertie cried, "Mister, wont you please to stop? Do stop and let me have my twine!"

But the horse dashed onward. His driver did not hear the cries, and could not have stopped, if he had; and Bertie — the tears

rolling slowly down his cheeks—viewed the ruin with an aching heart. His cherished telegraph had disappeared, root and branch. A straggling end of twine hung from each spool. That was all that remained of it. Charley and Amy came over to comfort him.

“I didn’t think it would ever come to this,” he sobbed, as they burst into the room.

“Did you ever!” exclaimed Charley.

“It is too bad,” said Amy. “I think the man might have stopped. I am as sorry as anything.”

She had almost forgotten the wish so speedily gratified,—that pussy would break the whole thing down,—for her sympathies were all with Bertie. She was indignant with the carriage, the horse, and its driver; they had formed a league for the destruction of Bertie’s telegraph.

“I wish we hadn’t done it,” said Charley.

“I didn’t think she would make such a row.”

Charley felt injured because pussy objected to being stifled in a close basket. He thought she might have kept still when she knew how much he desired it, and he considered that she had made him a promise and failed to keep it, therefore, she was not a pussy of her word. He had no compassion for her terror and her fall.

"It was the best telegraph I ever saw," sobbed Bertie.

"So it was, a beauty. But don't cry, and we will make another."

Bertie shook his head. "I don't care about it, Charley, and a new one could never be as good."

"It might be better."

"No, Charley."

"Then I'll tell you what it is, Bertie, you shall go into partnership with me."

"Oh, do!" said Amy. "Go into partnership with Charley; that will be splendid."

Bertie had been leaning towards the chicken business ever since Charley hatched out the eggs deserted by the black pullet, and the offer pleased him. But his loss had been sudden and the shock to his feelings great; so he could not throw off his sorrow in a moment, but he wiped the tears from his eyes and considered Charley's proposition.

"I will give you two of my roosters to begin with."

"Will you?" And Bertie's eyes glistened, but not with tears.

"Yes," said Charley; "I would give you a pullet, but I haven't got but one."

"Oh, no matter about the pullet; the rooster will give me a start." And Bertie began to speculate upon the profits that were sure to come; for grandma was a reliable customer, and always paid high prices.

Charley's offer was truly generous. Four of his five orphans had already begun to

crow, leaving him but one lady hen, while the gender of the newly-hatched chickens was not yet apparent.

"I am glad of one thing, anyhow," he remarked, looking at the wreck,—"that her catship was in the basket, and not Flora."

"You never would have tried to send Flora over really and truly!"

"I am afraid I should, really and truly, if you had not objected, for the little pet wanted to go. But I didn't."

"No, Charley, and we ought to be very thankful that it was no worse. And pussy got off nicely too."

"Yes, with every one of her nine lives safe and sound. I don't believe she got so much as a scratch; and that reminds me— This memento is very touching; I have not had time to think of it before." And he examined the scratch on the back of his hand.

"Does it smart?"

"It stings like fire, Amy. I wish she had not appealed to my feelings quite so strongly. She slighted you, Bertie."

"Forgot me entirely, Charley, but I am not jealous; I can forgive her. I wonder what has become of her."

" 'Though lost to sight, to memory dear,' "

said Charley, pathetically, quoting from a sheet of motto wafers and nursing his hand.

" 'But the hope of return takes the sting from adieu,' "

said Amy.

"That is an uncertain remedy. I shall try arnica. Besides, I don't approve of experiments." He said this with a rueful glance at the bits of twine that fluttered in the wind.

Amy's eyes followed his. "I never would have believed it, Charley."

"No more would I," sighed Bertie; "it was the heavy messages that ruined us. If we

had stuck to the little basket, it would not have happened."

The little basket that travelled along the line so smoothly and steadily lay discarded upon the table. Charley took it up tenderly. "You are right, Bertie. If we had stuck to this, it would have carried our messages so long as handle and body held together. It was the heavy messages that ruined us. It is all over now," sighed Bertie, — "the telegraph is dead."

"And next comes the funeral," said Charley. "We may as well bury the remains."

"Yes," said Bertie. "Where is the hammer?"

Amy produced the hammer, and Charley drew the nail from the spool outside the window, and took in the straggling end of twine. Then he went over to Amy's chamber and removed the other spool. Bertie witnessed the proceedings through the medium of the

hen business. His future profits cheered and sustained him. Charley wound the remnants of twine around the spools and dropped them into the little basket.

"Give it to me," said Amy. She took the basket from Charley's hand and carried it away, out of sight.

Bertie's telegraph was dead and buried.